

**NATURAL BRIDGE APPALACHIAN TRAIL CLUB (NBATC)**  
**TRAIL MAINTAINER'S RESPONSIBILITIES**  
**Appalachian Trail and Blue Blaze Trails**

A Trail Maintainer is an individual or group of NBATC members who has adopted a section of the Appalachian Trail within the portion of the Trail that the NBATC manages. A Blue Blaze Maintainer is an individual or group of NBATC members who has adopted one or more of the Blue Blaze trails in the area that NBATC manages. Being a maintainer offers good exercise and that wonderful feeling of contributing personal time and effort in helping maintain and protect our wonderful trail resources for the enjoyment of current and future generations.

**Frequency of Maintenance Trips**

Maintainers should visit and/or work on their sections about four times per year. Many maintainers make trips far more frequently. Required trip frequency depends upon many factors and is a judgment issue to be resolved by the individual maintainer. Generally speaking, maintainers should walk their section each year prior to April 1 to remove limbs and/or trees that have fallen onto or across the trail, clean out water bars, check the condition of shelters, and repair or report any significant trail damage. Depending on the weather and the elevation of the section, the maintainer should make a weed cutting trip through the section between May 15 and July 1. If the weeds are particularly bad on a section, a second weed cutting trip may be required later.

**Maintainer Duties**

A trail maintainer's duties include the following:

1. Remove fallen limbs and trees from the trail. Most can be removed as is, or by cutting using a small folding saw, bow saw, or an ax.
2. Remove encroaching vegetation from the treadway. The trail corridor should be cleared four feet across, and no bushes, branches, or weeds should be permitted to brush the hiker's legs. Particular emphasis should be placed on insuring that the uphill side of the trail is properly cleared. Clip overhead and side branches and limbs to maintain a four-foot wide by eight-foot high corridor. It is best to cut small branches off as close as possible to the trunk of the bush. During the spring and summer weed season the maintainer should cut the weeds to maintain the four-foot wide corridor.
3. Using a fire rake, pulaski, shovel, or other tool, remove leaves and dirt from water bars so water will be diverted off the trail. Report water bars in need of repair or sections where more water bars are needed to the Supervisor of Trails.
4. Trail maintainers should remove all litter from the trail and pack it out. Makeshift campsite structures within view of the trail should be removed, and unnatural materials carried out.
5. Trail maintainers should assure that trails on sidehills are eighteen to twenty-four inches wide, slightly outsloping, and not narrowed by soil collapsing from the uphill side. Pulaskis and fire rakes should be used where needed to widen sidehill treadway. If this work is too difficult for the maintainer, contact the Supervisor of Trails.
6. Trail maintainers are responsible for repainting the blazes on their section. This is normally required about every three years. Blazes should be two inches wide by six inches high in size. They need to be placed in both directions. North bound blazes and south bound blazes should not be placed on the same tree. Obscure turns and road -crossings should be marked with double blazes.
7. If possible, shelters should be checked more frequently than trails. Remove litter, literature and articles left in the shelter. Remove cans and tinfoil from the fireplace ring. Sweep out the shelter and outhouse. Outhouse doors should have a latch to keep the door closed. Check for and destroy wasp nests in the shelter and outhouse. Check shelter and outhouse roofs for leakage and missing or damaged shingles. Report needed repairs to Supervisor of Trails. Most maintainers place registers in shelters for hikers as needed.
8. Clean out springs that are filled with leaves and dirt. Scoop out a place at least large enough to fill a water bottle. Scan the area for poisonous reptiles before you start your work.
9. Use fallen limbs or branches to disguise abandoned trail segments and to discourage the shortcutting of switchbacks.
10. Signs should be in good condition with sturdy posts.

11. At scenic overlooks and viewpoints if trees are encroaching on the view, the trail maintainer may do some clearing to afford the hiker a better view.

These are most of the normal duties expected of a trail maintainer. If a maintainer has any doubt about what course of action to take, or needs help from the work crews, call the Supervisor of Trails. A maintainer should not attempt any work which the maintainer is not comfortable doing or which may present a problem with safety.

For additional information on trail maintenance standards, all maintainers should have a copy of Appalachian Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance (2<sup>nd</sup> edition). This handbook is available from the ATC.

### **Safety and Regulations**

The use of chain saws or crosscut saws is restricted to formally certified Sawyers only. The Sawyer Certification process involves taking and passing a Sawyer Course administered by the US Forest Service. In addition the Sawyer is required to be certified in First Aid and in CPR. NBATC members interested in becoming a Sawyer should contact the Supervisor of Trails to determine need for additional Sawyers within the Club.

Tail gate safety sessions must be performed and documented on each trip. The NBATC website has the necessary forms.

All maintainers are expected to follow safe practices and wear proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). A maintainer's most basic duty is to help insure his personal safety and that of his fellow maintainers.

The use of chain saws and weed eaters is not permitted in designated Wilderness Areas. Maintainers are expected to be aware of the various Wilderness Areas in the region maintained by NBATC and strictly adhere to this requirement.

The creation or blazing of new trails or paths is not permitted unless formally approved by NBATC, Appalachian Trail Conservancy and all Agency Partners.

*NBATC Maintainers are representatives of our Club. Non compliance with any safety requirements or other restrictions reflects very poorly upon NBATC and could seriously jeopardize the trust placed in us by our Agency Partners who are so important in helping us accomplish our mission.*

*NBATC Maintainers are covered by Forest Service or Park Service insurance when performing maintenance duties on behalf of the Club. Non compliance with regulations could nullify this coverage.*

### **Maintainer Communications**

All maintainers should strive to communicate with the Supervisor of Trails, Work Crew Leaders and other maintainers in an appropriate manner. Imagine what information you may wish to have and strive to insure that others receive the same. Reporting of trail conditions, whether "all clear" or "blow down work needed" is vital to other maintainers and work crews and will reduce unnecessary trips. This type of information is best communicated ASAP by visiting [nbatc.org](http://nbatc.org) and using the work hour reporting feature or emailing [maint.report@nbatc.org](mailto:maint.report@nbatc.org).

### **Equipment**

Maintainers purchase their own gloves, pruning or bow saws, hand trimmers, axes and loppers as needed. Many maintainers also purchase their own fire rakes and pulaskis. The Club maintains an inventory of fire rakes, pulaskis, weed eaters, bow saws, crosscut saws and chain saws that can be loaned to maintainers. Equipment borrowed should be returned in a timely manner and in the same (or better) condition as received.

### **Reporting of Hours Worked**

Please report all work hours (including travel and preparation hours) on a timely basis: sign onto [nbatc.org](http://nbatc.org) and use the work hour reporting feature or email [maint.report@nbatc.org](mailto:maint.report@nbatc.org). Doing this records your work hours, your miles if reported, and also communicates the conditions observed, work performed or work needed to the performed in one easy step.

NBATC reports all work hours to the ATC, US Forest Service, and Park Service as appropriate. Volunteer work hours are very important for Trail management and in funding Appalachian Trail work. Our reporting period is October 1, through September 30. All hours worked during September should be reported by October 5 of each year to insure adherence to Agency Partner reporting deadlines. Hours reported after this date cannot be included in reports to the Agency Partners or for the various awards presented by NBATC.